

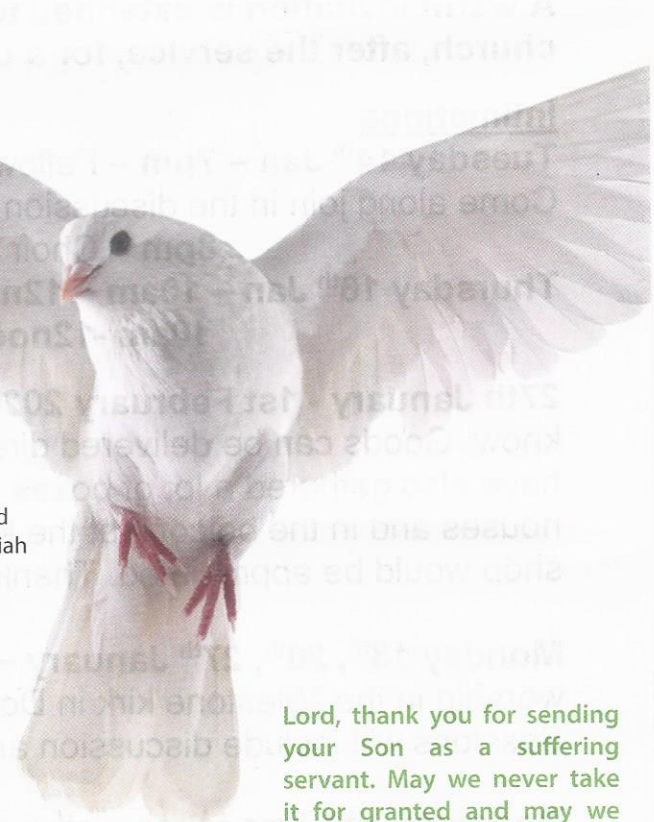
A dove descending

Caroline Fletcher *reflects on* Matthew 3:13-end

Jesus' baptism marks the start of his public ministry, but it often puzzles people. The baptism that John performs signifies repentance, so why does the sinless Christ need to be baptised? Indeed, John himself seems to share these concerns, protesting that it would make more sense if he were baptised by Christ, rather than the other way around. Jesus' response suggests that he acknowledges John's objections, but he urges the Baptist to go ahead anyway, as his purpose in seeking baptism is not repentance but obedience to God.

The words from heaven: "This is my Son, the Beloved" are a reference to Psalm 2:7, which was recited at the anointing of a king and had come to be associated with the hoped-for Messiah. Therefore, Jesus' baptism is like a public anointing of a heavenly king and an acknowledgement of him as the Christ.

The words from heaven continue by saying that God is "well pleased" with the Son. This, too, is believed to be a reference to an Old Testament scripture – this time Isaiah 42:1. This is also believed to refer to the Messiah, set within the context of what are known as the "suffering servant" passages. Christians understand these as prophecies about Jesus which reflect the suffering that he endured. This suggests that God was not only using Christ's baptism to affirm Jesus as Messiah, but to indicate what kind of Messiah he was going to be – God's servant, whose ministry would be costly. 😊



Lord, thank you for sending your Son as a suffering servant. May we never take it for granted and may we seek to follow his example of obedience to your will. Amen.

The indigenous people of Australia

Max Serjeant continues his series about Aboriginal culture and Christianity.

Although at first glance Christianity and traditional Aboriginal beliefs seem poles apart, many Aboriginal Christians say they are two faces of the same coin.

Reverend George Rosendale – a Lutheran from Northern Queensland and member of the Gwuyimithirr people – says: "I believe the Gospel has been with the Aborigines since creation.

...When they came to understand the Gospel they began to say, 'It is very much like our teaching. Especially the Old Testament stories and laws'.

Methodist Reverend Djiniyini Gondarra from Arnhem Land says: "Sacred sites are where our law and ceremony are embodied. God gave us our law – not in the written form as with the Jewish people, but in the form of the land and the ceremonies and stories that go with it."

Many find Jesus' story has particular resonance. "Christ did not get worried about material things," says Deacon Boniface Perdjert, a Murrinhpatha Catholic from the Northern Territory. "He was born on the move, like many of us... He liked the bush as we do, and loved nature and open spaces." 😊

Finding God on the smallholding

by Jeni Parsons

Tomorrow we will wassail our apple trees both on our smallholding and in our near neighbour's orchard. We always do it on January 13th because in our part of Wales it marks Hen Galan – the old New Year – from the time in 1752 when the calendars changed but this bit of Wales kept to the old ways.

Wassailing is a pre-Christian tradition but one I'm happy to embrace, because it's a shout of thanks for past abundance and a hope for the future harvest. We speak to the apple tree, sprinkle cider around it, put a piece of toast in the branches and bang pots to drive away evil.

Drawing close to the natural world is part of our everyday life here and marking special seasons for thanks and for hope is an expression of worship of the God who brings abundance for all in nature to share. 😊

“Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that thou art
Thou my best thought, by day or by night;
Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.”

Eleanor Hull (1860-1935), hymn-writer, journalist and scholar

Church of Scotland: Orphir and Stenness Parish

Interim Moderator: Rev June Freeth 721449

Locum Minister Rev Martin Prentice **Session Clerk:** Nicol 811242

There is a loop system. Adjust hearing aids to benefit.

A warm invitation is extended to everyone to meet in the hall at the back of the church, after the service, for a cup of tea.

Intimations

Tuesday 14th Jan – 7pm – Fellowship The study is - Personal Faith and Choice. Come along join in the discussion and prayer, or just come along and listen.

8pm – Choir

Thursday 16th Jan – 10am – 12noon Community Café in the kirk hall

10am -12noon The Post Office will be open in the vestry

27th January - 1st February 2020 Blue Door: If you need items collected let Carol know. Goods can be delivered directly to the shop anytime during the week, but we have also gathered a lot of boxes and bags which are currently being stored at folk's houses and in the balcony at the kirk, so a few volunteers to deliver them to the shop would be appreciated. Thank you.

Monday 13th, 20th, 27th January – 7.30pm. There are sessions about leading worship in the Milestone kirk in Dounby, led by Linda Broadly, locum minister. Sessions will include discussion and sharing experience. We are welcome to attend.

Door rota - it's time to renew the door rota so if anyone would like added to or removed from the list, please let Carol know tel 873596 or email vmainland@btinternet.com

Defibrillator- posters have been placed throughout the church giving the location of the nearest defibrillator and information required when phoning 999 .

Readings

Isaiah 42: 1-9: The Servant, a Light to the Nations.

Acts 10: 34-43: The Gentiles Hear the Good News

Hymns

334 On Jordan's bank

335 Out of the flowing river

521 Children of God, reach out to one another. (T. Lord of the Years, 159)

682 Go in grace and make disciples

283 The voice of God goes out to all the world" (T.Woodlands 286)

Doxology

May God's blessing surround you each day,

As you trust Him and walk in his way,

May his presence within guard and keep you from sin,

Go in peace, go in joy, go in love.